

interpreted, and underpaid, when peace fills the land. Lo, the poor doctor, fool that he is, trying to destroy his own means of livelihood, trying to return public good for private evil, trying to make the preposterous ideal of service in the world, the guide of his daily conduct.

Then see the remarkable effect of war. Forthwith must this same doctor assume as of right, full responsibility for the health and physical efficiency of the fighting man, and the civilian populace alike. He is expected by common consent to meet the emergency at whatever cost of time, livelihood and life may result. And he assumes the responsibility and meets the emergency, going cheerfully and voluntarily into a service which is only less dangerous than the flying corps. What he is expected to do, he does. What he has trained himself to do, he does. His detractors, and critics and enemies in time of peace, expect him to do this and he does it.

But in times of war where are the self-sufficient and highly trained -paths and -isms and fads and cults? Where is the Christian Science medical unit going to the front to care for the wounded? Where is the osteopathic base hospital, and the naturopathic dressing station, and the chiropractic sanitary corps? What a chance for the drugless healers to cure trench foot, and eradicate disease carriers, and prevent camp epidemics. What a chance for the so-called Christian Scientists to show their Christianity in works of relief and mercy, and their science in the care of wounded and sick. What a chance for cult and -ism to prove their mettle, and speak by action. What a chance,—what a rare chance. Yet where are they, when the serious business of war clangs in, to sift the wheat from the chaff, and winnow out the real effectual human service of the physician?

A. C. R.

#### BLINDNESS IN THE UNITED STATES.

The forthcoming report on the blind in the United States announced by Director Sam. L. Rogers, of the Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce, indicates that 30.8 per cent., or somewhat less than one-third, of the blind population lost their sight when less than 20 years of age (including those born blind); 47.4 per cent., or somewhat less than one-half, during the early or middle years of adult life (from 20 to 64 years); and 21.8 per cent., or a little over one-fifth, in old age (after passing their sixty-fifth year). More persons were reported as having lost their sight when less than 5 years of age than in any other five-year period of life, 16.4 per cent., or about one-sixth, of the total being included in this group; persons reported as born blind formed 6.6 per cent. of the total and persons reported as losing sight when less than 1 year old 5 per cent., these two groups together contributing 11.6 per cent., or more than one-tenth, of those reporting the age when vision was lost.

These statistics are based on an enumeration of the blind made in connection with the census

of 1910. The blind population enumerated was 57,272, and by sending out special schedules through the mails the Bureau obtained data regarding such subjects as the cause of the blindness and the age when it occurred from 29,242 blind persons.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STATISTICS.

The fact that the 30,000 blind represented in the returns had on the average been blind for 16 years makes plain the gravity of this misfortune. Although the risk of blindness in infancy, childhood, or youth is relatively small, yet, as shown by these figures, the complete elimination of that risk would reduce the blind population by nearly one-third. Similarly, the elimination of the risk of blindness during the early or middle years of adult life would reduce the blind population by nearly one-half, while the elimination of the high risk in old age would cause a reduction of only one-fifth in the number of existing cases. Of course, the earlier the age at which the sight is lost, the greater the magnitude of the misfortune; loss of sight in infancy means a life of blindness, while loss of sight in old age ordinarily means only a few years of that affliction. For this reason the increase in individual happiness and the benefits to society in general that would accrue from a successful campaign against blindness in early life would obviously be vastly greater than would result from a corresponding reduction in the blindness occurring in old age. In this connection it is significant that since 1880 there has been a distinct decrease in the proportion of blind who lost their sight in infancy. In 1880 persons who became blind before completing their first year of life formed 15.3 per cent. of the total reporting, as compared with only 11.6 per cent. in 1910. This decrease is explained largely by the great progress made toward preventing blindness among newborn infants through the use of the Credé method of prophylaxis for ophthalmia neonatorum, which was discovered in 1884.

#### RELATIVE INCREASE OF OCCUPATIONAL BLINDNESS.

The proportion of the blind who lost their sight during the early or middle years of adult life has increased somewhat since 1880. It is probable that this increase is in part the result of the great industrial growth of the United States in the last 30 years, which would naturally bring in its train an increase in the number of cases of blindness due to occupational injury or disease, and hence in the number occurring during the years of economic activity.

A much larger proportion of males than of females lost their sight in the early or middle years of adult life (20 to 64 years of age), the percentage for males being 51.4, or more than one-half, as compared with a percentage of 41.8, or about two-fifths, for females. This marked difference with regard to the period of life when loss of sight occurred is of course the result in the main of the cases of blindness from industrial accidents or occupational diseases, which are numerous among the male blind but are relatively few among the females, and in which obviously

loss of sight occurs for the most part during the early or middle years of adult life.

#### BLINDNESS A BAR TO MARRIAGE.

The statistics as to age at which sight was lost bring out some interesting facts concerning the extent to which marriage takes place among the blind. The majority of those who have not married before they lose their sight continue single for the remainder of their lives. But the fact that the percentage single is higher among the females who lost their sight before the age of 20 than it is among the males indicates that blindness is less of a bar to marriage in the case of males than of females, since, all other things being equal, the percentage should have been somewhat lower for females by reason of the fact that women ordinarily marry earlier than men. The figures show, however, that while marriage is much less frequent among the blind than among those who can see, it is by no means rare; of the males who had lost their sight between the ages of 15 and 19, for example, about one-third, and of the females, about one-fifth, had married since they became blind.

### Medical Preparedness

#### INFORMATION REGARDING THE CORRELATED ACTIVITIES

OF THE

#### COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE AND THE ADVISORY COMMISSION, THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENTS OF GOVERNMENT

AND THE

#### COMMITTEE OF AMERICAN PHYSICIANS FOR MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS

Under existing conditions it is desirable that every physician as well as every other loyal citizen of America should be prepared to render active service to the Federal Government, remembering that the protection afforded by the Government has made it possible for its citizens to enjoy liberty, peace and prosperity.

The avenues through which the most effective service can be rendered by members of the medical profession have taken definite and concrete form. Briefly, the plan is that all medical activities should co-operate with the Council of National Defense.

It would seem desirable at this time to state explicitly just what the Council of National Defense and its various agencies are.

The Council of National Defense was created by Act of Congress, August 29, 1916.

Sec. 2. That a Council of National Defense is hereby established, for the coordination of industries and resources for the national security and welfare, to consist of the Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Secretary of Labor.

That the Council of National Defense shall nominate to the President, and the President shall

appoint, an **advisory commission**, consisting of not more than seven persons, each of whom shall have special knowledge of some industry, public utility, or the development of some natural resource, or be otherwise specially qualified, in the opinion of the council, for the performance of the duties hereinafter provided. \* \* \* \*

That the Council of National Defense shall adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of its work, which rules and regulations shall be subject to the approval of the President, and shall provide for the work of the advisory commission to the end that the special knowledge of such commission may be developed by suitable investigation, research, and inquiry and made available in conference and report for the use of the council; and the council may organize subordinate bodies for its assistance in special investigations, either by the employment of experts or by the creation of committees of specially qualified persons to serve without compensation, but to direct the investigations of experts so employed.

A committee of distinguished physicians was asked to present to the President, names of medical men suitable for membership on the advisory commission. Dr. Franklin H. Martin of Chicago was selected.

The following statement was issued by President Wilson on the night of October 11, 1916, in announcing his appointment of the civilian advisory members of the Council of National Defense:

The Council of National Defense has been created because the Congress has realized that the country is best prepared for war when thoroughly prepared for peace. From an economic point of view there is now very little difference between the machinery required for commercial efficiency and that required for military purposes.

In both cases the whole industrial mechanism must be organized in the most effective way. Upon this conception of the national welfare the council is organized in the words of the act for "the creation of relations which will render possible in time of need the immediate concentration and utilization of the resources of the nation."

The organization of the council likewise opens up a new and direct channel of communication and co-operation between business and scientific men and all departments of the government, and it is hoped that it will in addition become a rallying point for civic bodies working for the national defense. The council's chief functions are:

1. The coordination of all forms of transportation and the development of means of transportation to meet the military, industrial and commercial needs of the nation.

2. The extension of the industrial mobilization work of the Committee on Industrial Preparedness of the Naval Consulting Board and complete information as to our present manufacturing and producing facilities adaptable to many sided uses of modern warfare will be procured, analyzed and made use of.

One of the objects of the council will be to inform American manufacturers as to the part which they can and must play in national emergency. It is empowered to establish at once and maintain through subordinate bodies of specially qualified persons an auxiliary organization composed of men of the best creative and administrative capacity, capable of mobilizing to the utmost the resources of the country.

The personnel of the council's advisory members, appointed without regard to party, marks the entrance of the non-partisan engineer and professional man into American governmental affairs on a wider scale than ever before. It is responsive to the increased demand for and need of business